



General Information: (312) 353-1880

Media Contact: Paul LaPorte

(312) 353-1138

Internet: [www.bls.gov/ro5](http://www.bls.gov/ro5)

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## **AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGES IN NORTH DAKOTA: THIRD QUARTER 2006**

The average weekly wage in Cass County was \$649 in the third quarter of 2006, 0.2 percent higher than it was one year earlier, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. Regional Commissioner Jay A. Mousa noted that Cass' average weekly wage was \$135 below the national level of \$784 and that its wage growth was slower than the nationwide increase of 0.9 percent. Cass was the only large county in North Dakota—that is, it had 75,000 or more jobs as measured by 2005 annual average employment.

Nationally, there were 325 large counties of which 212 had average weekly wages below the national average. Cass County's wage placed it 272<sup>nd</sup>, in the bottom quartile of the national ranking. Cass also had slower-than-average wage growth though its ranking was higher at 194<sup>th</sup>.

### **Large County Average Weekly Wages**

Average weekly wages were higher than the national average in 111 of the 325 largest counties in the U.S. New York County, N.Y., held the top position with an average weekly wage of \$1,421. Santa Clara, Calif., was second with an average wage of \$1,414, followed by Arlington, Va. (\$1,323), Washington, D.C. (\$1,307), and San Mateo, Calif. (\$1,278).

At the other end of the spectrum, Cameron County, Texas, reported the lowest average weekly wage (\$493) in the U.S., followed by the counties of Hidalgo, Texas (\$514), Horry, S.C. (\$517), Webb, Texas (\$525), and Yakima, Wash. (\$537).

Over the year, the national average weekly wage rose by 0.9 percent. Among the largest counties, Kent, R.I., led the nation in wage growth with an increase of 18.4 percent from the third quarter of 2005 to the third quarter of 2006. Orleans, La., was second with 16.2-percent growth, followed by the counties of Trumbull, Ohio (12.3 percent); and Jefferson, La., and Jefferson, Texas (10.5 percent each). The high average weekly wage growth rate for Orleans County was related to the disproportionate job losses in lower-paid industries due to the impact of Hurricane Katrina. That is, the loss of low paid jobs due to the storm boosted average wages in Orleans County.

One hundred and twelve counties experienced over-the-year declines in average weekly wages. Passaic, N.J., had the largest decrease, -10.2 percent, followed by the counties of Williamson, Texas (-5.7 percent); Fort Bend, Texas (-5.0 percent); Loudoun, Va. (-4.2 percent); and Ventura, Calif. (-4.0 percent).

### **State Average Weekly Wages**

The average weekly wage in North Dakota was \$589 in the third quarter of 2006, \$195 below that for the nation. Only three states averaged lower weekly wages: Mississippi (\$585), Montana (\$581), and South Dakota (\$571). The five highest wage levels in the U.S. were in the District of Columbia (\$1,307), Connecticut (\$957), Massachusetts and New York (\$950, each), and New Jersey (\$931).

Average weekly wages in North Dakota rose 1.4 percent over the year, placing it in the upper third of the national ranking in wage growth at 16<sup>th</sup>. Wyoming experienced a wage gain of 10 percent from the third quarter of 2005 to the third quarter of 2006, higher than any other state. Louisiana was second with a 7.1-percent wage increase. Rounding out the top five were New Mexico (4.0 percent), Rhode Island (3.7 percent), and the District of Columbia (3.6 percent). Four states suffered wage declines: Connecticut (-0.9 percent), Minnesota (-0.6 percent), Indiana (-0.3 percent), and Virginia (-0.1 percent).

Average weekly wage data by county are compiled under the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) program, also known as the ES-202 program. The data are derived from reports submitted by employers subject to state and federal unemployment insurance (UI) laws. The 8.8 million employer reports cover 135.0 million full- and part-time workers. The average weekly values are calculated by dividing quarterly total wages by the average of the three monthly employment levels of those covered by UI programs. The result is then divided by 13, the number of weeks in a quarter. It is to be noted, therefore, that over-the-year wage changes for geographic areas may reflect shifts in the composition of employment by industry, occupation, and such other factors as hours of work. Thus, wages may vary among counties, metropolitan areas, or states for reasons other than changes in the average wage level. Data for all states, Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), counties, and the nation are available on the BLS Web site at <http://www.bls.gov/cew/>; however, data in QCEW press releases have been revised (see Technical Note below) and may not match the data contained on the Bureau's Web site.

### **Additional statistics and other information**

An annual bulletin, *Employment and Wages*, features comprehensive information by detailed industry on establishments, employment, and wages for the nation and all states. The 2005 edition of this bulletin contains selected data produced by Business Employment Dynamics (BED) on job gains and losses, as well as selected data from the fourth quarter 2005 version of this news release. This edition will also be the first to include the data on a CD for enhanced access and usability. As a result of this change, the printed booklet will contain only selected graphic representation of QCEW data; the data tables themselves will be published exclusively in electronic formats as PDF and fixed-width text files. *Employment and Wages Annual Averages, 2005* will be available for sale soon from the United States Government Printing Office, Superintendent of Documents. On-line ordering information is available at <http://bookstore.gpo.gov/>. The 2005 bulletin is available in a portable document format (PDF) on the BLS Web site at <http://www.bls.gov/cew/cewbultn05.htm>.

Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: 202-691-5200; TDD message referral phone number: 1-800-877-8339.

For personal assistance or further information on the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages Program, as well as other Bureau programs, contact the Midwest Information Office in Chicago at (312) 353-1880 from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. CT.

### **Hurricane Katrina**

The employment and wages reported in this news release reflect the impact of Hurricane Katrina and ongoing labor market trends in certain counties. The effects of Hurricane Katrina, which hit the Gulf Coast on August 29, 2005, were first reflected in the September QCEW employment counts and the wage totals for the third quarter of 2005. This catastrophic storm continued to affect monthly employment and quarterly wage totals in parts of Louisiana and Mississippi in the third quarter of 2006. For more information, see the QCEW section of the Katrina coverage on the BLS Web site (<http://www.bls.gov/katrina/qcewquestions.htm>).

## TECHNICAL NOTE

QCEW data are the sums of individual establishment records reflecting the number of establishments that exist in a county or industry at a point in time. For this reason, county and industry data are not designed to be used as a time series.

The preliminary QCEW data presented in this release may differ from data released by the individual states as well as from the data presented on the BLS Web site. The potential differences result from several causes. Differences between BLS and state published data may be due to the continuing receipt, review and editing of UI data over time. On the other hand, differences between data in this release and the data found on the BLS Web site are the result of adjustments made to improve over-the-year comparisons. Specifically, these adjustments account for administrative (noneconomic) changes such as a correction to a previously reported location or industry classification. Adjusting for these administrative changes allows users to more accurately assess changes of an economic nature (such as a firm moving from one county to another or changing its primary economic activity) over a 12-month period. Currently, adjusted data are available only from BLS press releases.

**Table 1. Covered (1) employment and wages in the United States and the largest county in North Dakota, third quarter 2006 (2)**

Area	Employment	Average Weekly Wage (3)			
	September 2006 (thousands)	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level (4)	Percent change, third quarter 2005-06 (5)	National ranking by percent change (4)
United States (6)	134,989	\$784	--	0.9	--
North Dakota	342.2	589	48	1.4	16
Cass, N.D.	96.2	649	272	.2	194

(1) Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

(2) Data are preliminary.

(3) Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

(4) Ranking does not include the county of San Juan, Puerto Rico.

(5) Percent changes were computed from quarterly employment and pay data adjusted for noneconomic county reclassifications.

(6) Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

**Table 2. Covered (1) employment and wages by state, third quarter 2006 (2)**

State	Employment	Average weekly wage (3)			
	September 2006 (thousands)	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level	Percent change, third quarter 2005 06	National ranking by percent change
United States (4)	134,988.90	\$784	-	0.9	-
Alabama	1,938.9	682	34	1.9	13
Alaska	324.8	798	13	.1	42
Arizona	2,629.0	753	20	1.1	21
Arkansas	1,183.9	603	46	.7	26
California	15,655.0	892	6	.6	31
Colorado	2,260.1	819	11	1.4	16
Connecticut	1,680.7	957	2	-.9	51
Delaware	424.6	850	8	3.4	6
District of Columbia	674.2	1,307	1	3.6	5
Florida	7,941.7	713	26	.7	26
Georgia	4,039.3	752	21	.5	34
Hawaii	621.2	722	24	1.1	21
Idaho	661.2	613	45	1.3	19
Illinois	5,883.6	831	9	.7	26
Indiana	2,922.7	687	31	-.3	49
Iowa	1,480.7	641	41	.0	44
Kansas	1,347.3	662	36	.6	31
Kentucky	1,795.1	656	38	.6	31
Louisiana	1,835.7	683	33	7.1	2
Maine	610.2	636	42	.8	25
Maryland	2,545.0	858	7	.5	34
Massachusetts	3,228.1	950	3	.3	37
Michigan	4,278.9	790	14	.3	37
Minnesota	2,685.1	784	16	-.6	50
Mississippi	1,134.3	585	49	2.1	11
Missouri	2,725.1	691	30	.0	44
Montana	434.4	581	50	3.0	8
Nebraska	906.9	633	43	.0	44
Nevada	1,287.6	751	22	.0	44
New Hampshire	634.9	774	17	.3	37
New Jersey	3,984.7	931	5	.3	37
New Mexico	826.1	654	39	4.0	3
New York	8,471.7	950	3	1.1	21
North Carolina	3,982.6	700	28	1.6	15
North Dakota	342.2	589	48	1.4	16
Ohio	5,350.9	725	23	.3	37
Oklahoma	1,517.6	633	43	3.3	7
Oregon	1,729.2	719	25	.7	26
Pennsylvania	5,644.8	768	18	.5	34
Rhode Island	490.8	763	19	3.7	4
South Carolina	1,866.0	642	40	1.1	21
South Dakota	389.6	571	51	.7	26
Tennessee	2,761.1	698	29	1.2	20
Texas	10,019.0	786	15	2.5	10
Utah	1,188.7	660	37	2.0	12
Vermont	305.8	672	35	1.4	16
Virginia	3,649.5	815	12	-.1	48
Washington	2,911.9	823	10	2.7	9
West Virginia	711.8	599	47	1.7	14
Wisconsin	2,800.8	687	31	.1	42
Wyoming	274.1	706	27	10.0	1
Puerto Rico	1,020.9	439	(5)	1.2	(5)
Virgin Islands	43.2	692	(5)	12.5	(5)

(1) Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

(2) Data are preliminary.

(3) Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

(4) Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

(5) Data not included in the national ranking.